

LUPEN CROOK

THE MEDWAY TOWNS, Dysunited Kingdom – 30 Jul 2010
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“in Fight Folk we trust”

‘THE PROS AND CONS OF EATING OUT’ RELEASES ON 4 OCT 2010 Long-awaited third album from Lupen Crook has confirmed release date

*“As a songwriter I have taken myself on a voyage of discovery and misadventure. I have willingly allowed ‘the moment’ and my natural impulse, however frowned upon it may be, to envelop me entirely. With these experiences in mind, this assessment of **The Pros and Cons of Eating Out** has been formed.”*

A self-confessed method writer, **Lupen Crook** has spent the last two years wandering, wondering and wilfully exploring the extreme nature of the human character. Mr Crook has obsessively pursued the darker side of life; the sinful side, the secret side, those parts of ourselves that we dare not reveal.

Lupen Crook’s songs and lyrics are underpinned by music written and arranged in collaboration with his most trusted long-term partners in crime, **Tom and Bob Langridge** – collectively known as **The Murderbirds**. All who have seen their live shows will testify to the passion and proficiency that they bring to Crook’s output.

The album was recorded, engineered, mixed and mastered by **Jim Riley** in the earthy, analogue environment of Ranscombe Studios in Medway. **Howie B** (Björk, U2, Tricky) produced three of its tracks, which were mixed by **Ben Thackeray** alongside Jim Riley – two of which were released in July as a double ‘A’ side single.

The album release follows a hectic and intense Summer schedule of gigs, festivals and impromptu “guerrilla” performances based around the Crooked gypsy cart, during which this new material was showcased to enthusiastic responses. The band has delighted existing fans and made many new friends during this period.

Exposure via radio play has also continued to increase interest in the band. BBC 6Music’s Tom Robinson was inundated with positive feedback after playing some of their new material in May. He wondered out loud whether an orchestrated campaign was in effect, though actually it was a genuinely spontaneous response.

The Pros and Cons of Eating Out, Crook’s third album, will be released on the Crooked Family’s Beast Reality Records label (catalogue number BR0005) on 4th October 2010. It will be available through standard physical distribution channels via Shellshock, download (iTunes, etc.) and by mail order from www.lupencrook.com.

Further information on Lupen Crook’s output can be found at www.lupencrook.com, where Mr Crook and his collaborators post regular updates on their activities and other Crooked items of interest, as well as maintaining an ongoing dialogue with their ever-increasing fan community.

For more information on Lupen Crook, The Murderbirds, the Crooked Family, Beast Reality Records and the album’s title, themes and artwork, please read on...

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ALBUM TITLE, ARTWORK & THEMES

A STATEMENT BY LUPEN CROOK

Like everything in this life, to get the full picture one cannot rely on a single viewpoint or perspective; multiple layers can and should be explored for consideration. There are Pros and Cons to everything in life. Nothing is straightforward... nothing of interest, anyhow. "Eating out" is living outside of your safety zone, being the explorer, the peasant jester, the adventurer. As a writer, my job has always been to report back my findings. Along the way I have met many people, some crooked, some straight, some cruel, more often kind. What I have discovered is that every single person, if the right circumstances present themselves, will happily give themselves up to that animal instinct that burns beneath us, dormant inside of everyone.

This can, should and probably will at some inappropriate moment come to the surface. I say take control; learn about these instincts, because that is where the truth of oneself lies. So too lies the reality of having to return to 'this world', the world with its restraints, its etiquette, its anti-instinct. The safe and constrained environment that we have allowed to form is stupefying us, frightening us into believing that 'this' or 'that' is wrong or dangerous, when in fact these things are often natural; more often than not, extremely instinctual.

Some might look at the artwork that forms the front cover of this album and see something offensive: a depiction of an orgy – the type of thing that happens behind closed doors, dirty, unclean, demonic and sinful. It is an orgy, true enough, but aside from the fact it looks like damn fine fun to me, it stands for what I am interested in: it is a celebration of not only sex but also the electric energies that can and do exist between people and which reveal what lies beyond the surface, the real feelings that possess us. On this album, I have revealed myself. These are my findings, my feelings and interpretations of experiences I've had. This image quite simply encourages the ethos of truth. That truth can be simultaneously invigorating, uncomfortable and mischievous... that's no bad thing.

The point I make with this painting is that - whether or not for some this is pure fantasy, or nightmare, or in fact reality - it is part of our instinctual desire to connect with others. The anonymous individuals in the picture are all joined. There is no break in the bonds that hold them together. Anonymity exists not through fear of being revealed, or to hide who these people are or what they are doing. It is simply that they have no need for names, dates, status, language - they are free, and they also are as one. Say what you will, but this is where my journey has taken me to date. The next chapter of this tale will surely reveal more - perhaps even contradict this ideal or opinion entirely - but that this episode has been lived means that it is living - it is real.

I am fascinated by connections and contradictions. Amongst most of the people I've met by chance, from the slick city white collars to the street slum wanderers, the nervy indie kids to violently inclined chav gangs, it seems that a feeling of disconnection paradoxically connects them all together. Even though they have often pitted themselves against each other, it is as though we have all been separately downtrodden by the 'tricks' that have been played upon us by industries and authorities. It is here that I have discovered my inspiration, where I have managed to make my own connections, if only on one to one basis. The consequences of my impulsive misadventures have revealed both treasures and terrors about this place we live in, the person I am and the effect of my actions on those around me. I have documented these as honestly as possible.

As a songwriter, as a band, as a Family, these twin concepts of honesty and truth – however subjective – are important to us, regardless of where they lead us. This is simply because, for us, creativity must have no boundaries. For any idea to be given its full due, it must be allowed to roam free and discover itself naturally. As a songwriter I have taken myself on a voyage of discovery and misadventure. I have willingly allowed 'the moment' and my natural impulse - however frowned upon it may be - to envelop me entirely. With these experiences in mind, this assessment of The Pros and Cons of Eating Out has been formed.

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WHO IS LUPEN CROOK?

Lupen Crook has frequently confused people, both wilfully and unintentionally, by the range of his aspirations. His persona has appeared inconsistent and ill-defined, shifting between overlapping mantles of lone folkie, loco punker, schizoid artist, gutter poet, sex-obsessed lover, drunken romantic, twisted rocker, doting father and provocative prankster. Actually, it's only confusing if you're looking for a pigeonhole to slot him into.

His refusal to be categorised has led to misunderstandings. Some who loved his finely-honed and studio-constructed debut album struggled with the genre-crunching, Murderbirds-fuelled, lo-fi vibe of his second. This third album continues their journey with even greater self-confidence. In fact, his output in prior bands demonstrates a consistent trajectory from which the solo debut was merely a temporary departure.

So, if Lupen Crook is not the folk-pixie-minstrel of popular repute, who is he? A late-twentysomething who sold his soul to rock 'n' roll at the age of eight, practicing AC/DC-inspired axe moves in the bedroom mirror in his school uniform. A multi-dimensional singer-songwriter-artist-poet, inspired by the self-sufficient, anti-authoritarian ethos of the punk movement. An instinctive collaborator and hesitantly charismatic ringleader.

He's essentially the same person he always was, inevitably a little older and a lot wiser. The shock value of some of his earlier recordings has given way to a more considered – yet no less intense – exploration of his artistic vision. His lyrics have become more plain-spoken and direct, his songs more melodic. Brutal honesty is the key to his output. Don't take his words as stories, or character sketches; they are pure autobiography.

The crucial point is that Lupen Crook and his collaborators value the integrity of their work above all other considerations. Their uncompromising approach to their art ensures an authenticity that allows people to make personal, individual connections to their output. Its simultaneous expression via multiple media (music, artwork, writing, jewellery and so on) adds to the scope and diversity of its appeal.

More to the point, their recordings and live shows are pure entertainment. Those new to the band, free of preconceptions, latch on to the intensity of the music and lyrics, but also the under-appreciated sense of humour and the wildly varying musical strands woven together into a coherent whole. Enthusiastic feedback throughout 2010's festival season has confirmed the band's accessibility and approachability.

As for the music itself... any attempts to describe it in terms of genre tend to end up in convoluted phrases covering the whole range from ska-punk to vaudeville via prog rock and beyond. Better, maybe, to look at the band's long-term influences to understand where the breadth of styles comes from: AC/DC, Carter USM, The Specials, Led Zeppelin, Tom Waits, The Clash, Sex Pistols, Bert Jansch, Radiohead and Wire, amongst others.

The apparent contradictions in Lupen Crook's vision, attitude and music are actually his greatest strength, because they ensure that his potential appeal isn't tied to any particular demographic. His fans include the young at heart and the old before their time, the conventional and the free-spirited, the settled and the dispossessed, the clear-headed and the deranged. They find both themselves and their opposites in his work.

What is Lupen Crook's relevance in 2010? To a certain extent, the music is timeless and its themes are universal: identity and relationships; love, loss and lust. Artists have explored this territory again and again in their own unique ways through the ages. Possibly a more contemporary significance - at a time of anxiety, uncertainty and conservative values - is that Lupen Crook has the potential to be both agitator and antidote.

Whether exploring his own personality and relationship with the world around him, or the personal and political relationships between others, his work maintains a substance and distinctiveness of vision that repays close attention. With the release of *The Pros and Cons of Eating Out*, the scope of his confessional and questioning worldview has been articulated more clearly than ever before. Confusion is entirely optional.

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THE WORLD OF LUPEN CROOK

Names have a peculiar power in the world of Lupen Crook. In each of the three cases below, the names appeared first. The concepts emerged hazily to begin with and then like-minded individuals gathered around to help them become a tangible reality. These identities have now taken on a momentum of their own.

THE MURDERBIRDS

Lupen Crook is the focal point for recordings and gigs. He plays solo as and when necessary. However, all who have seen the full-band performances will be under no illusion that this is anything other than a group affair. The Murderbirds have stood at Mr Crook's side for half a decade and remain his closest partners in crime.

The nucleus of The Murderbirds – formed during the recording sessions for Lupen Crook's debut album – is the multi-talented Langridge brothers, Bob and Tom. They have been joined over the years by numerous other collaborators, most recently Clayton Boothroyd on bass, double-bass and percussion.

The Murderbirds today embody a five-year working relationship that has gone from strength to strength. Their activities demonstrate the organic way in which Lupen Crook prefers to work, via chance, opportunity and redefinition. The birds have their freedom, but have never flown far from the Crooked nest.

THE CROOKED FAMILY

The Crooked Family is the broader group of collaborators surrounding Lupen Crook's vision, a loosely defined but tight-knit collection of artists and thinkers, schemers and dreamers. Their output encompasses numerous forms of self-expression, combined in varying permutations as inspiration dictates and circumstances require.

For example, Tom Langridge's graphic design skills have combined with Lupen Crook's artwork for the album sleeve. Lucy Langridge has taken Mr Crook's jewellery designs and turned them into a beautiful reality. Similar Crooked collaborations have taken place with Jenny Hardcore (photography) and Hg (words and web).

More recently, Mr Crook, Tom and Hg have explored a shared interest in film, resulting in five music videos to date. The Family members are established talents in their own right and other Crooked Family collaborations extend beyond Crook himself, such as Hg contributing editing skills to Sam Hayes' prize-nominated fiction.

The Crooked Family isn't merely a cute "gang name", but a collective of people whose relationships extend beyond the bounds of day-to-day friendship into an informal but binding commitment to mutual support and experimentation. Its members pool interests, skills and visions to bring out the best in each other.

BEAST REALITY

Beast Reality began as an idea in 2008 when Lupen Crook released a compilation album on an imprint that he named Beast Reality Records. Its production plant was based on a spindle of Tesco Value CDs and a Staples photocopier; its distribution network was the canvas shoulder bag that he frequently misplaced at gigs.

In 2009, as the Crooked Family started to articulate its objectives more clearly, a more pronounced and better organised DIY strategy was developed by Hg. A website went online and three EPs were released in varying physical and digital formats, via mail order and mainstream channels including iTunes and Amazon.

The Pros and Cons of Eating Out is the label's fifth release, with distribution extended to mainstream and independent record shops. We share a long-term vision of Beast Reality as a tattered umbrella organisation, flapping in the wind like a crow's broken wing... a showcase for other emerging and like-minded artists.

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FEEDBACK

PRESS REVIEWS – 2006-2009

“... who knows what really lurks behind Lupen Crook's pretty demeanour? Whatever it is, though, it sounds utterly compelling”

– NME

“Medway-based songwriter Lupen Crook is a bewitching talent... a uniquely twisted mind, providing you've got the stomach for it”

– Uncut

“... like a more jaundiced Ray Davies as the song travels from voice and guitar through muscular band punctuation... this is original and highly concentrated stuff”

– Mojo

“... indisputable genius. It's not Dylan going electric, you understand; it's much more significant than that. Sublime stuff.”

– The Fly

“... the sound of a soul stripped naked, then strapped to a guitar, set on fire and sent shrieking down the street... Splendidly uncompromising stuff.”

– Clash Magazine

“... a songwriter who has an air of insanity and a genuine edge-of-the-seat brilliance that is both puzzling and highly addictive.”

– The Sun

WEB AND SOCIAL NETWORKING – SUMMER 2010

“Absurd folk-ska-prog madness. Pretty cool! [...] Reminds me of a teenage rocked up Tom Waits. Way too cool. Might have to pick up the album. [...] Some of the teenage emo chicks seem less than impressed with Lupen. Are the musicians too good and too un-obsessed with an image for them?”

- Rocabluesman live-tweeting on Twitter during the Latitude festival 2010

“Stumbled on your Latitude gig in the forest on Saturday: you rocked! Loved the passion and the mix of sounds and influences, and to be really enjoying yourselves. Can't wait to hear more of you elsewhere.”

- Diane Tuner on Facebook after the Latitude festival 2010

“You guys were awesome tonight at Scala! Met Clayton after. Top guy! Will try see you guys again!”

- Sergei Palmer on Facebook after a gig at the Scala

“Great gig in Sunrise Arena... my 2 little girls (you met them after) loved you and are converts. Listened to the EP over and over on the way home.”

- Toby commenting on the Lupen Crook website after the Latitude festival 2010

“Saw you guys for the first time at Latitude, standing at the barriers – you were amazing, ever since I got home I've been hunting down your stuff.”

- Nancy commenting on the Lupen Crook website after the Latitude festival 2010

“We stumbled across your Sunrise Arena gig... we were gobsmacked from start to finish. And you could tell from the looks on everyone's faces around us everyone was thinking the same. A really memorable show in a fantastic setting... Can't wait for the album – where have you been all our lives?!?”

- Mark commenting on the Lupen Crook website after the Latitude festival 2010

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NOTES TO THE EDITOR

PERSONNEL

- Lupen Crook: Guitar, Lyrics & Lead Vocals
- Tom Langridge: Keyboards, Guitar, Percussion & Vocals
- Bob Langridge: Drums, Percussion & Vocals
- Clayton Boothroyd: Bass

GIGS AND FESTIVALS

Up-to-date details available at www.lupencrook.com.

FURTHER PRESS MATERIAL

Video links, hi-res press shots etc. are available at www.lupencrook.com/press/.

LABEL DETAILS

Beast Reality Records website: <http://www.beastreality.co.uk>

CONTACT INFORMATION

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ONLINE PRESENCES

- www.lupencrook.com
- www.facebook.com/lupencrook
- www.myspace.com/lupencrook
- www.twitter.com/lupencrook